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SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA UPDATE: 17 NOVEMBER 2005

REF: ZAGREB 1810 AND PREVIOUS

11. SUMMARY: As of November 17, 2005, no additional cases of H5N1 have been confirmed in Croatia. The GOC is continuing its surveillance efforts and Post hopes to receive an English version of the Croatian national pandemic influenza preparedness plan by the end of November. Media interest in avian influenza (AI) is almost non-existent. END SUMMARY

The Veterinary Directorate Remains Vigilant

12. Assistant Minister Mate Brstilo, Veterinary Directorate, confirmed to Econoff that the GOC continues to collect and test samples and had collected over 3000 samples as of November 11. Econoff spoke with the Dutch agricultural counsellor, Oscar Meuffels on November 15, who noted the Dutch will pay for a one month lease of a real time reverse transcription-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) machine for the GOC and that the machine was expected to arrive in Zagreb either November 18 or 21. (A real time RT-PCR machine will allow the GOC to more quickly process the samples that have been collected to determine if a virus is present.) The GOC is also interested in obtaining a DNA purifier machine to identify virus subtypes. According to Meuffels, the GOC is currently using accurate but antiquated and labor-intensive technology.

English translation of national preparedness plan expected

12. Ira Margan Gjenero, director of the Infectious Disease and Epidemiology Department at the Croatian Institute of Public Health told Econoff on November 14 that she hopes to have an English translation of the national pandemic preparedness plan by the end of November. Post will forward a copy when it becomes available.

Media coverage wanes

13. Media interest in AI is almost non-existent, but the press did report that Minister of Health Neven Ljubicic met with Chinese Deputy Minister of Health Jiang Zoujun on November 14 to discuss infectious diseases, including avian influenza.

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